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The principal claim of this paper is that the Japanese passive consists of two different constructions, each derived from a distinct deep structure and each having associated with it a distinct set of syntactic and semantic properties. One of these constructions, the "adversative passive," implies that the grammatical subject of the sentence is adversely affected by the action expressed by the verb. The other construction is as neutral in meaning as the English passive and is referred to here as the "pure passive." Previous treatments of the passive (Bloch, Martin, and Jorden) are discussed briefly and it is concluded that the analysis offered in this paper comes the closest to an accurate description of the syntactic and semantic facts. It is also felt that the adversative passive may be a traditional Japanese construction while the pure passive is a relatively new innovation in Japanese due to the influence of translation from Western language into Japanese. (See also AL 001 564.) (JD)

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THE SO-CALLED JAPANESE PASSIVE

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AL 001 565

The So-Called Japanese Passive*

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Studies of Japanese syntax generally devote considerable attention to the nature of the so-called Japanese passive construction. Some treat the passive as a single construction, while others differentiate between two or more different types of passives on various grounds. These analyses, however, fail to account adequately for the interesting syntactic and semantic properties characteristic of the Japanese passive. It is the goal of this paper to provide a syntactic analysis that is congruent with the semantic facts of the passive.

The principal claim of this paper is that the Japanese passive consists of two different constructions, each derived from a different deep structure and each having associated with it a distinct set of syntactic and semantic properties. One of these constructions implies that the grammatical subject of the sentence is adversely affected by the action expressed by the verb, and this construction will therefore be referred to as the adversative passive. The other construction is as neutral in meaning as the English passive and will be referred to as the pure passive. We will use the term Japanese passive, or simply passive, as a cover term to refer to the two constructions collectively.

The difference between pure passive and adversative passive meanings has been noticed by various scholars of Japanese. Bloch, for example, noted that the class meaning of the passive is approximately defined as follows:

> 'is affected by someone else's action,' including the meanings 'is acted upon' (in the sense of the Latin or English passive) and 'is adversely affected by someone else's action. The passive of a transitive verb may have either one of these two subsidiary meanings: the passive of an intransitive verb has only the second meaning. (1946:310)

Bloch thus claims that the two different meanings of the passive have distinct distributions governed by structural criteria. This paper is an attempt to characterize those criteria more precisely.

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The passive verb differs from its active counterpart in possessing the suffix -rare. Like certain other suffixes, including the non-past tense morpheme -ru, -rare loses its initial consonant following a consonant-final stem. Items 1 and 2 show the characteristic behavior of the two suffixes mentioned above after vowel-final and consonant-final stems, respectively:

(1) a. tabe - ru 'eat - non-past'

b. tabe - rare - ru 'eat - passive - non-past'

(2) a. yom - u 'read - non-past'

b. yom - are - ru 'read - passive - non-past'

If we consider a passive sentence such as 3a, it seems to be related to the active sentence 3b in just the same way that an English passive relates to its corresponding active:

(3) a. kodomo wa sensei ni sikar - are - ta. PASSIVE
child teacher scold -PASS.- past

b. sensei wa kodomo o sikat - ta. ACTIVE

The grammatical subject in 3a, followed by the postposition wa (underlying ga), is identical to the direct object of 3b, marked with o. The grammatical subject of 3b, on the other hand, is represented as an agent, marked with ni, in 3a. Thus there appears to be the same sort of interchange of noun phrases in Japanese as in English, associated in this case with the presence or absence of the passive morpheme -rare.

The resemblance between the Japanese passive and the English passive, however, is not very extensive. Japanese passives frequently manifest one more noun phrase than English passives, and it has been said that in such cases the grammatical subject is indirectly, rather than directly, affected by the action of the verb. In sentence 4, for example, the grammatical subject, watasi, is not the object of the verb, and in fact the original object is retained in the sentence with its postposition o.

(4) watasi wa sensei ni kodomo o sikar - are - ta.
I teacher child scold
'I was adversely affected by the teacher scolding (my) child.'

This extra noun phrase also makes it possible to have "passives" of intransitive verbs. Thus, sentence 5 involves the intransitive verb "to die."

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[1] In all cases in this paper, wa is derived from an underlying ga.

(5) watasi wa kodomo ni sin - are - ta.
I child die
'I was adversely affected by (my) child dying.'

Notice that the surface structure of sentence 5 with an intransitive verb and sentence 3a with a transitive verb are indistinguishable.

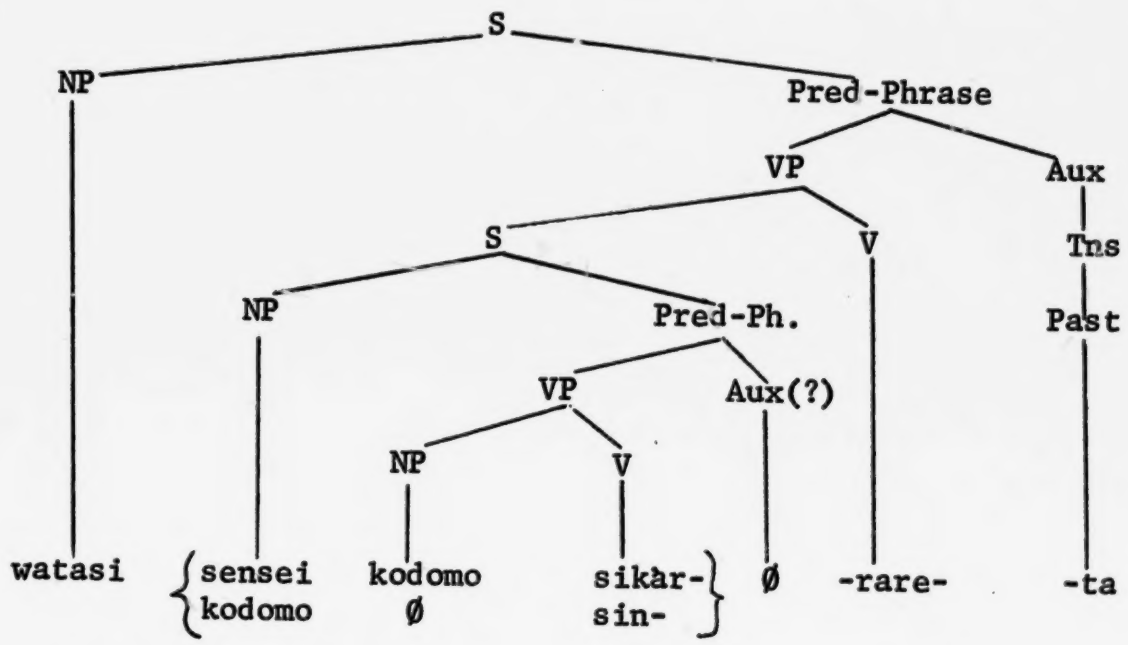
It is important to point out that passives with the extra noun phrase do not have equivalent active counterparts. There are no sentences, for example, like 6a and 6b:

(6) a. *watasi wa sensei {ni / ga/wa} kodomo o sikat - ta.

b. *watasi wa kodomo {ni / ga/wa} sin - da.

The possibility of having the extra noun phrase, then, is directly associated with the presence of -rare. Since the extra noun phrase is always the grammatical subject, these facts lead us to postulate the deep structure represented in 7 for the adversative passive.

(7)



In this analysis, -rare is the verb of a higher-level sentence in the deep structure, which becomes affixed to the verb in its object complement sentence by a transformational rule. The subject of the verb -rare is the extra noun phrase. The adversative meaning is a property of this morpheme -rare. While it is still not clear how the postpositions are assigned, the subject of the constituent sentence must receive the postposition ni instead of wa or ga. However this is performed, it seems clearly to be the same phenomenon as in causative sentences such as 8.

(8) watasi wa kodomo ni hoorensoo o tabe - sase - ta.
I child spinach eat -CAUSE - past.
'I made the child eat spinach.'

Sentence 4, with its implication that the child belongs to the grammatical subject, may suggest an alternative explanation of the adversative passive, deriving the extra noun phrase from within the sentence, namely as an underlying possessor of the object. Sentences 9a and 9b, however, show that such a position cannot work, since there is no reasonable possesive relationship between the grammatical subject and any noun phrase internal to the sentence.

(9) a. watasi wa ame ni hur - are - ta.
I rain fall
'I was adversely affected by the rain falling.'

b. watasi wa ano hito ni seikoo s - are - ta.
I that person success make
'I was adversely affected by that person's succeeding.'

In the event that the direct object or indirect object of the embedded sentence is identical with the subject of -rare, it is deleted by a transformational rule. This deletion is a very general process and is well-motivated elsewhere in the grammar. It accounts for sentences such as 10a, from the intermediate structure 10b, where the subject of -rare, is identical with the direct object of the constituent sentence. It will be observed that sentence 3a is also derivable from a source of this shape.

(10) a. watasi wa sensei ni sikar - are - ta.
I teacher scold
'I was adversely affected by the teacher scolding me.'
or 'I was scolded by the teacher.'

b. *watasi wa sensei ni watasi o sikar - are - ta.

In addition, this rule derives sentences such as 11a from 11b, where the subject of the verb -rare is identical to the indirect object of the constituent sentence.

(11) a. watasi wa sensei ni warui ten o tuke - rare - ta.
I teacher bad grade attach
'I was adversely affected by the teacher giving me a bad grade.' or 'I was given a bad grade by the teacher.'

b. *watasi wa sensei ni watasi ni warui ten o tuke - rare - ta.

There are strong constraints on the adversative passive construction which will be mentioned here only briefly. Most commonly noted is that the subject of -rare must be human (or at least animate). The subject of the constituent sentence, moreover, must be dynamic, that is, an animate object, a natural phenomenon, or a machine, and it may not be identical with the subject of -rare.

The pure passive, in contrast, lacks the distinguishing syntactic properties of the adversative passive, as well as the semantic properties. It does not take the extra noun phrase and is thus directly relatable to its active counterpart. It is not constrained by the requirement that the grammatical subject be human or animate, as is obvious from 12a.

(12) a. ano hon ga kodomo ni yom - are - ta.
that book child read
'That book was read by (my) child.'

b. ano hon o kodomo ni yom - are - ta.
'(I) was adversely affected by (my) child reading that book.'

Since the grammatical subject of a pure passive must always represent either a direct object or indirect object, the only time it can overtly express one is if the other is possible. That is, the only time a pure passive verb can appear with a direct object is when the verb can take an underlying dative as well, this dative occurring as the surface subject in this case. Unlike the adversative passive, which requires a complex deep structure like item 7, there are no analogous arguments for the pure passive. Rather, the same arguments apply here as in English, leading to the conclusion that the pure passive is the result of a movement transformation applied to an essentially active sentence. This accounts not only for the syntactic properties the pure passive manifests, but also for the fact that the pure passive is semantically equivalent to its active counterpart, while the same cannot be said for the adversative passive.

One of the consequences of the analysis offered here is that there are certain sentences which are unambiguously pure passive, others which are unambiguously adversative passive, and still others which are ambiguous between the two meanings. Because the adversative passive requires a human (or animate) grammatical subject, a sentence such as 12a with an inanimate subject is unambiguously pure passive. 12b, on the other hand, is unambiguously adversative since it clearly manifests the extra noun phrase. Intransitive verbs (as B'och noted) are also strictly adversative. Structurally ambiguous sentences require, above all, that the grammatical subject be human (or animate), and second, that one of the possible noun phrases associated with verb phrase (that is, direct or indirect object) be unexpressed to meet the requirements of the pure passive.

Having presented our own analysis of the relationship between the syntactic properties of the passive and meaning, we will consider briefly the views of other scholars in this area. Bloch, as we have already seen, noted that intransitive verbs were strictly adversative, and claimed that transitive verbs may have either meaning. This, as we now know, is correct as far as it goes, but it does not describe the circumstances under which a transitive verb has one meaning or the other. We cannot even tell from his description whether all transitive verbs are ambiguous between both meanings, whether there is a discrete set which have

one meaning and another which has the other meaning, or whether there is overlap on some basis. Both 12a and 12b are unambiguous, but in different directions, even though it is the same verb involved in both cases, while 3a is ambiguous. Without specification of these circumstances, and without explanation of them, Bloch's statement is not much help.

Martin, in his book Essential Japanese, differentiates between those verbs which indicate an action that can be done to a person and those that do not. Those which can be done to a person he considers to be pure passive and the others adversative. It is not a matter, however, of whether the action can be done to a person which determines pure passives, since we have seen that 3a can also be adversative and 4, which is something done to a person and according to Martin's criteria should be pure passive, is unambiguously adversative. On the other hand, sentence 12a does not represent an action that can be done to a person and yet is strictly pure passive in meaning.

Jorden makes her differentiation on the following grounds:

> Passives based on intransitive verbals, and on transitive verbals denoting an action which is never done to people, regularly have the unfavorable shade of meaning.
>
> However, a passive based on a verbal which denotes an action which can be directed toward a person, may or may not have the unfavorable shade of meaning, depending on the individual verbal and/or on context. (1963:306)

Jorden's statement is perhaps the most accurate of all the analyses offered so far, but in the absence of a definition of the appropriate context upon which this unfavorable shade of meaning is dependent, her statement, too, must be regarded as incomplete and inadequate.

These three views have been presented to illustrate both the factual inconsistency and the vagueness which characterizes to different degrees all of the views of the passive we have seen so far. We feel that the analysis offered in this paper comes the closest to an accurate description of the syntactic and semantic facts.

We must point out a qualification of our position, however, namely that there are certain general classes of exceptions to this analysis which are explainable by supplementary generalizations which do not nullify the overall analysis presented here. These qualifications also apply to the positions of Bloch, Martin, Jorden and others who claim, for example, that intransitive verbs regularly have the adversative meaning, since there are some exceptional circumstances where they do not. Unfortunately, time is too short to consider these cases here.

On the basis of our intuitive feelings about these two passives, and on the basis of other observations we have made, we offer the hypothesis that the adversative passive is a traditional Japanese

construction, but that the pure passive is a relatively recent innovation in Japanese due to the influence of translation from Western language. By relatively recent, we refer to the last hundred years or so, during which time translation has been extensive.

The pure passive, we feel, is part of a larger complex which we refer to as translation style, a style of language developed from translation but which now characterizes also the style in which textbooks are written. Among the characteristics of translation style, aside from the extensive use of the pure passive, are: (1) the retention of subjects where they would normally be deleted when understood in colloquial Japanese, (2) the extensive use of pronouns, especially the third person pronouns kare ('he') and kanozyo (she), which is not characteristic of colloquial Japanese, and (3) the use of certain stylized expressions.

Our intuitive feeling regarding the pure passive is that it is much less acceptable than the adversative passive, and this seems to be corroborated by the reaction of older Japanese speakers to pure passive sentences. As a part of translation style, we also believe the pure passive to be a phenomenon primarily of written and not spoken Japanese, acquired relatively late by the child, probably in high school or college where texts written in this style are prevalent. Moreover, there is some evidence from the psycholinguistic study by Agnes Niyekawa-Howard (reported next) that indicates that the view of the pure passive as a recent innovation is probably correct.

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